



## **TESTIMONY**

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Hartford HealthCare at Home

**February 25, 2015**

## **To SUPPORT**

**SB 164: AAC Medicaid Coverage for Telemonitoring**

Dear Chairwoman Flexer, Chairman Serra, Ranking Members Kelly and Bolinsky, and members of the Committee:

In 2001 Hartford HealthCare at Home became the first home care agency in the state of Connecticut to provide Cardiac Telemonitoring in the home. Cardiac Telemonitoring is the use of specialized equipment that is placed in a client's home and can "communicate" vital information to a monitoring center that is overseen by a Cardiac Nurse Specialist.

Cardiac Telemonitoring has become widely used by HHCAH nurses when transitioning a client from an acute care setting or skilled nursing facility to home. Clients with Chronic Lung Disease and Cardiac Disease have traditionally been able to reap the benefits from this program; however, the admitting nurse has the ability to refer any HHCAH client. Telemonitoring can quickly and efficiently provide an accurate snapshot of a client's heart health post hospitalization. The unit consists of a monitor, a scale, a blood pressure cuff and a pulse oximeter. The monitor is programmed to alert the client to take their blood pressure, weight, heart rate and oxygen saturation at a specific time each day. After transmitting this information, the client is then prompted to answer a series of questions that have been individually designed to illicit how the client is progressing in regards to heart health.

The Cardiac Nurse Specialist reviews the results from each client in real time. The nurse is then able to make a rapid assessment of the client's status. This program, which remains an important aspect of home health care, assists clients and their physicians in managing their chronic disease at home. Its use has decreased rehospitalizations by alerting health care professions when secondary measures must be taken and it provides for a sense of comfort to clients when faced with serious health issues.

The Cardiac Telemonitoring program continues to achieve exceptional results. Throughout fiscal year 2015, 2,500 clients were monitored in the program. According to Medicare's Home Health Compare (nationally reported Outcome Assessment Information Set otherwise known as OASIS) 63.8% of clients reported an improvement in breathing and only 16.7% of clients were readmitted to the hospital. Additionally, 92.6% of the home health team treated symptoms of

heart failure, a figure that reflects the need for continued assessment, treatment and intervention of clients in the post acute setting.

While the Cardiac Telemonitoring program has proven to keep clients home, insurance companies do not provide for reimbursement for this life saving technology. The total cost for the program for FY 2015 was \$391,000. Though Hartford HealthCare at Home has not received reimbursement for this life saving technology, the Agency remains committed not only to continuing this program; but also, to investing in the newest technology so that our clients get the best possible care.

Hartford HealthCare at Home (formerly VNA HealthCare) in conjunction with the University of Connecticut conducted research on the benefits of Telemonitoring. The study confirmed what the Agency had previously concluded; that clients achieve better outcomes when provided with Telemonitoring and interventions by the Cardiac Nurse Specialist including less emergency room visits, less hospitalizations and increased quality of life. The benefits of Telemonitoring also include more personal freedom and greater cost-efficiency. The financial burden on the state will be lessened if clients can recuperate in the home with the proper care including technology that can save lives. Often, simple things can make all the difference in terms of keeping someone in their own home, rather than transitioning them back to an acute care hospital or a skilled nursing facility. Cardiac Telemonitoring helps clients achieve these goals. It is for these reasons that Hartford HealthCare at Home supports the adoption of SB 164.

Respectfully submitted,



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